



## WHEN TERRIBLE THINGS HAPPEN AT WORK

We often take our workplace for granted and assume that we can go to work each day with an assurance of safety and well-being. Workplace accidents or violence; the unexpected loss of a co-worker due to accident, illness or suicide; health concerns; any of these factors combined with the daily stresses of your workload may create overwhelming feelings.

For some, the nature of our work may involve coping with loss of life when dealing with vulnerable populations. However, no matter what your job, circumstances may lead to extraordinary events that lead to anger, fear or sadness. These are normal reactions to abnormal occurrences.

### WHAT YOU MAY EXPERIENCE

#### **Intrusive reactions**

- Distressing thoughts or images of the event while awake or dreaming
- Upsetting emotional or physical reactions to reminders of the experience
- Feeling like the experience is happening all over again ("flashback")

#### **Avoidance and withdrawal reactions**

- Avoid talking, thinking, and having feelings about the traumatic event
- Avoid reminders of the event (places and people connected to what happened)
- Restricted emotions; feeling numb
- Feelings of detachment and estrangement from others; social withdrawal
- Loss of interest in usually pleasurable activities

#### **Physical arousal reactions**

- Constantly being "on the lookout" for danger, startling easily, or being jumpy
- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep, problems concentrating or paying attention

#### **Trauma and Loss reminders**

- Places, people, sights, sounds, smells, and feelings that remind you of the disaster
- Can bring on distressing mental images, thoughts, and emotional/physical reactions
- Common examples include: sudden loud noises, the smell of fire, sirens of ambulances, locations where you experienced the disaster, seeing people with disabilities, funerals, anniversaries of the disaster, and television/radio news about the disaster

### WHAT HELPS

Talking to another person for support  
Spending time with others  
Engaging in positive distracting activities  
(sports, hobbies, reading)  
Using relaxation methods (breathing exercises,  
meditation, calming self-talk)  
Getting adequate rest and eating healthy meals  
Participating in a support group  
Trying to maintain a normal schedule  
Exercising in moderation  
Scheduling pleasant activities  
Keeping a journal  
Taking breaks  
Seeking counseling

### WHAT DOESN'T HELP

Using alcohol or drugs to cope  
Working too much  
Extreme avoidance of thinking or talking about  
the event  
Withdrawing from family or friends  
Anger or violence  
Not taking care of yourself  
Overeating or failing to eat  
Doing risky things  
Excessive TV or computer games  
Withdrawing from pleasant activities  
Blaming others

### Kentucky Community Crisis Response Board

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